

THE EYE SHIELD



Issue 16

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MESSAGE FROM ME

Welcome to issue sixteen of The Eye Shield as I, Jake Collins of Harpenden, share with you some more of my thoughts and observations about Nightmare. Believe it or not, it is a full year now since I first started writing TES. I enjoy it tremendously, and I hope some of you are still enjoying reading it every two months. This issue was supposed to herald the beginning of a new article by Robin Barlow, but technical difficulties have meant that this has unfortunately had to be postponed until the next issue. Fear not, though, because *A Last Resort*, by Carl Bateson, continues. We original TES readers first started reading this story way back in June 1997, which is now just over five years ago! Fortunately, each chapter is well worth the wait. The other regulars await you too, of course, but canny readers might have noticed that I have now reached the final Nightmare book - Lord Fear's Domain - in *I Think I Read Somewhere*. What does the future hold for this feature? Well, you might well find the answer very interesting, but only time will reveal it...

CORRESPONDENCE

Here is something from David Holt, who affectionately calls himself *Nightmare Dave*.

Dear Eye Shield.

As one of the biggest fans of Nightmare - that is, I am totally obsessed - if you gave me a chance I would never shut up about it. I love TES; it's fabulous!

Thank you very much, Nightmare Dave. I feel the same as you about Nightmare; in fact, I enjoy writing TES because it allows me to never shut up about it.

Dave has also sent me two of his favourite Nightmare quotes, and he has promised to do this for each future issue of TES. Thank you very much, Dave; I do appreciate reader input such as this. This issue, Dave has chosen two quotes from series 4, which he feels best epitomise the atmosphere of the series:

Pickle: *"To the Forest of Dunn the foolhardy come, and though they soon learn they seldom return..."*

Treguard: “*And what about you lot; do you think it’s a game? Well, do you?*”

There'll be more memorable quotes next time.

REMEMBER THIS?

Series 1/2/3. Level 1/2.

THE CORRIDOR OF THE CATACOMBS

It is such a simple idea to have a corridor with a choice of four exits, but it was used very effectively in Knightmare's early years in the shape of the Great Corridor of the Catacombs. This was effectively a long room with four doors, one of which the dungeoneer would have to be guided through in order to survive. It sounds like simplicity itself on face value, but it could be a very dangerous challenge indeed, as Treguard often stressed in series 1:

"Extreme warning, team, you have entered the Great Corridor of the Catacombs. This is patrolled by the Army of the Dead. Exit with haste, or your quest ends now!" - Treguard.

The skeletal army (clomping footsteps) was one of the Corridor's less impressive dangers, but there were plenty of challenges to test even the hardiest dungeoneers: salivating monsters, disappearing floors, moving walls, cryptic locks, or - in series 3 - advancing goblins, knights or ogres. Although these challenges were not responsible for many deaths directly, a few dungeoneers' fates were sealed in the Corridor.

Both David and Helen I in series 1 took the wrong door to escape, leading to entrapment and eventual starvation in the next chamber. And what about poor Julie I from series 3, defenceless thanks to the team's failure to answer Merlin's riddles? In the Corridor at the end of level two, goblins began to advance on Julie. It was not these that spelled her doom however, (mainly because they were pre-filmed), but a second pair of the little critters that appeared from the two doors near Julie to completely block her exit.

Having said all that, most teams managed to stride bravely past the dangers up ahead and continue on their way. This is no great marvel, however, as the Corridor was mostly used as a scare factor, just like so many other challenges. Still, the Corridor of the Catacombs fitted nicely in with the dark and ominous atmosphere of the early series, and seemed to epitomise the mysterious nature of the marauding creatures of myth that dwell in the Dungeon depths. In a nutshell, a classic and fitting challenge.

Difficulty: 4 If you can't walk the walk...

Killer Instinct: 5 Indirectly responsible for some deaths.

Gore Factor: 5 It just depends on what happens next, doesn't it?

Fairness: 9 It should be an easy stroll to freedom.

ADVENTURE TIME

In this age of heroes, the score still stands at Dungeon 5, Humans 1. Beth and friends are about to hear Merlin's second riddle. They are also looking for a spell for Hordriss.

"How can a knight be known other than by his name?" Merlin asks Beth.

"His coat of arms" Beth replies.

"Truth accepted" smiles Merlin warmly. "Well done, Beth, you have answered both my questions correctly, which means that you've earned some magic. The name of the magic is *reveal*. Do not use it willy-nilly, for it uncovers something that you need for your quest. Now, press on. If you survive as far as level three, we will meet again."

With that, the wizard is gone. The advisors guide Beth out of the room. The next chamber is vast and empty, with water dripping from the ceiling. There is no visible exit.

"Warning team" says Treguard. "This room appears to be empty, even of a doorway, and yet I sense that something is here."

"Cast the spell" Beth suggests.

"Spellcasting:" says the spellcaster. "R-E-V-E-A-L."

A door appears on the far wall. Above it hangs a green shield with a pattern that looks like three legs in a circle printed on it.

"Ah, this is the arken shield, team" Treguard tells them. "But can you reach it?"

By standing directly in front of the portal, Beth is able to jump up and touch the shield, which disappears in a green flash. The advisors then tell her to call Hordriss.

"Malefact! Malefact! Malefact!" Beth calls.

"Ah, Beth" says Hordriss as he appears in a flash of lightning. "You have kept our bargain. I assume that you found the spell."

"Yes, I did" she tells him.

"Then touch my medallion, and the knowledge to cast it will transfer to me."

Beth does so. Hordriss is enveloped in green light for a moment, before smiling at Beth in gratitude.

"Thank you, young person" he says. "And to show my gratitude, as promised, I will ensure your escape from this level. Come, we will journey together."

Hordriss leads Beth to the exit. They emerge into a room with four doors. Two are blocked by the massive skeletal figure of a marauding catacombite.

"Such distasteful sorcery!" exclaims Hordriss. "Now, let me think. Ah, yes, one of these doors will lead us to the final chamber of this level. Let us hope that it is not one of the pair that the catacombite is guarding."

"It probably is" Beth tells him. "Otherwise they wouldn't be guarded."

"True, how true" admits Hordriss, slightly crestfallen. "However, I will use a true-seeing charm to make sure. Opticam verity!"

The symbol of the Cup appears above the left-hand door behind the catacombite.

"As we feared" Hordriss muses. "Ah, well, I shall just have deal with our friend here."

Hordriss splays his fingers in front of him and sends a bout of lightning through the catacombite's eye sockets. Its long-dead brain incapacitated, the great skeletal form falls to the floor in a heap of bones.

"Most satisfying" Hordriss says as he leads Beth carefully through the debris. "But we must make haste now, through the door."

They emerge into the minecart chamber. The cart is waiting on the rails by the entrance to the mine.

"Here we are at the end of the level" says Treguard. "And your way through the force-field is clear. That is, of course, if Hordriss doesn't mind giving you a push."

"Well, of course I don't!" insists Hordriss. "Why would one? Come then, Beth, sit in the cart and prepare yourself for a ride."

When Beth is safely in the cart, Hordriss thanks her once again for her help and gives it a hefty shove. The cart rolls down the rails. As she passes the golden walls at an alarming rate, Beth begins to feel rather cart-sick. She is quite glad, therefore, when she lands in level three.

"Well done, team, for you've already made it much further than most" Treguard commends them. "But this level holds the Dungeon's toughest challenges, so keep your wits about you."

The advisors direct Beth out of the room. She emerges into the clue room, and is taken to the table.

"There's a shortsword, a joint of meat and a round shield" Beth tells her advisors. "I suggest we don't take the shortsword, because it's clearly an enemy weapon."

The advisors agree, so Beth picks up the meat and the shield and is directed out. She emerges into a vast chamber with one large door. There is a table here that features a large glowing letter **M**. Before the team can investigate, however, soft yet evil laughter fills the chamber as a haunted sword appears by the doorway.

"Warning, team, this haunting has been sent by Morghanna" Treguard

tells them. "Avoid it as you may, but you must reach that symbol."

By taking Beth a long-way-round via the back of the table, the advisors manage to save her from the sword. She touches the **M**, causing lightning to flash and a large vision of Merlin to appear in the chamber.

"Ah-ha, Beth, greetings" he says, then turns to address the sword. "Avaunt thee, spectre!"

"Well done, team, but you haven't heard the last of Morghanna" says Treguard ominously.

"Now, Beth, listen carefully" Merlin says to the dungeoneer. "Your path is relatively short now, but more dangerous than you might imagine. To help you cope upon it, I gift you one single spell. It is the spell *shadow*. Now, be brave, and good luck."

Merlin disappears in another flash. Beth is directed out of the room, and emerges into a cave that is swarming with cavernwights. There is an exit behind them, but there is no way past the mass of shuffling forms approaching the dungeoneer.

"Extreme warning team" says Treguard. "Here be cavernwights. They can neither see nor hear you, Beth, but their acute sense of smell has already pinpointed you as their next meal. You must find some way to divert their attention."

"Throw the meat into the corner!" exclaims an advisor.

"Huh?" queries Beth, quite stunned.

"Chuck the meat over their heads diagonally to your right, into the far corner!"

Beth does this. After a few seconds, the wights pick up the meat's scent instead of Beth's. They all mindlessly drift towards it. Once the exit is clear, Beth is hastily directed out. She finds herself in the stained-glass window room. All but one of the four paths have crumbled away, so there is to be no difficulty in choosing an exit, but Beth is forced to wait while her advisors peer intently at their screen to try and decipher some writing they think they can see on the floor in front of the stained-glass window. The trouble is, only odd lines are visible and they do not make sense.

"Well done for spotting the inscription, team, but you cannot read it as it is" Treguard informs them. "The writing is visible only when the lighting is correct, and the stained-glass window is letting in too much light for you to read it at present."

"Spellcasting:" says the spellcaster, taking the hint. "S-H-A-D-O-W."

The room is steeped in shadows and, sure enough, there is a word written on the floor: *freeze*. The team just have time to write it down before the spell wears off. Beth is finally directed down the steps and along the one

remaining path. She emerges into a small room dominated by an ugly gargoyle sitting above the only doorway. Its eyes roll to face Beth. Its mouth opens and it thunders a word.

"DOOM!" echoes through the chamber.

"Oh, no, team, this creature will sap your resolve!" exclaims Treguard.

"DOOM!"

"Hurry, take action!"

"DOOM!"

The advisors cannot pluck up the will-power to direct Beth. She is on her own. Raising the shield in front of her, she sees a green light spreading on the floor in front of her. She directs this at the gargoyle, which causes the creature to scream in rage and pain. Anxious to leave, Beth runs blindly forwards.

"Stop!" shouts an advisor, re-gathering her wits. "Now, take two large side-steps right and run forwards!"

Beth quickly does as she has been directed. The gargoyle's screams fade as the blackness of the portal absorbs Beth. She now stands in a huge hall with high vaulted ceilings. An exit is just visible at the far end. Anxious not to get trapped again, the advisors send Beth running for the exit. She is suddenly stopped in her tracks by the appearance of Morghanna in front of her.

"Not so fast, Beth" sneers the sorceress. "You have been exceptionally lucky to survive this far, but now your quest is over."

Morghanna begins to create a fireball in her hands. She smiles evilly as she does this.

"You heroes, nay heroines, make me sick!" Morghanna spits. "Your quests mean nothing in the face of true power like mine. Prepare to meet your end, little dungeoneer."

"Spellcasting:" the spellcaster finally manages to say. "F-R-E-E-Z-E."

As Morghanna is about to release her fireball, she is stopped in her tracks by an icy bolt leaping from Beth and hitting her full on.

"No!" screams Morghanna. "You cannot win. I will not allow it! You cannot..."

The evil sorceress is stopped as the magic overwhelms her and she freezes solid. Beth is quickly guided out. She emerges into a small chamber that contains only a stone altar. But the sight of the altar's contents makes the team gasp in joy: a golden chalice! Beth is directed to the altar. With excitement tingling through her, she reaches out and picks up the Cup that Heals. A fanfare resounds throughout the Dungeon.

"Fantastic!" cries Treguard excitedly. "You've mastered the Dungeon. Well done! Spellcasting: U-N-I-T-E."

As Beth is returned to the Great Hall of Knightmare Castle, Treguard and the team spend some time celebrating. Beth and her advisors, who are called Rachel, Charlotte and Hannah, are overjoyed to have won. When he has calmed down, Treguard calls Merlin to the Hall to join the celebration.

"Well done indeed, girls" Merlin congratulates them. "A thrilling and thoroughly-deserved victory. And to prove it, here are your trophies."

Merlin presents all four of them with a frightknight trophy and a symbol of squiredom. After one last bout of celebration, it is time for Knightmare's latest champions to leave.

"Spellcasting:" Merlin says. "H-O-M-E."

When the champions have gone, Merlin returns to the Dungeon. Treguard turns once again to the castle door, for more dungeoneers are waiting.

So, Beth and her friends have reduced the Dungeon's lead to 5-2. How will the next team affect that scoreline? Read the next Adventure Time to find out.

PUZZLE PAGE ONE

Here I have provided you with one series and twelve associated words.
The rest is up to you.

J	A	S	Y	L	V	E	S	T	E	R	H	A	N	D	S	K	E	I	S
R	O	K	T	I	D	E	H	S	E	T	T	E	S	E	M	B	E	H	T
E	V	A	E	R	Q	E	I	R	T	Y	U	S	I	O	I	P	A	S	D
F	G	R	H	J	K	L	E	Z	X	C	V	A	B	N	R	M	N	B	V
C	X	K	Z	A	S	L	L	K	H	G	F	N	D	S	K	A	Q	W	E
R	T	I	Y	U	I	O	D	P	A	S	D	D	F	G	E	H	J	K	L
I	B	L	E	L	I	E	V	E	I	N	M	R	I	R	N	A	C	L	E
S	Y	L	D	D	F	G	E	H	J	K	L	E	O	U	O	S	Y	E	X
T	H	I	B	E	G	G	A	T	E	M	A	S	T	E	R	L	I	S	E
P	I	G	V	G	Z	V	E	I	N	M	I	R	I	C	F	L	E	I	S
I	S	N	I	W	N	C	E	Y	O	U	L	O	R	D	F	E	A	R	C
X	A	M	E	E	A	L	O	N	S	G	E	Y	X	O	Y	U	T	H	H
E	I	N	G	N	F	E	D	E	E	H	T	E	W	O	D	L	R	U	N
L	I	N	E	D	T	E	X	E	L	N	E	I	Z	G	H	T	U	G	Y
F	I	A	R	O	V	E	W	I	I	T	H	B	L	O	E	B	G	H	D
O	F	F	R	L	O	M	S	O	T	M	E	R	U	O	O	C	R	K	G
A	J	U	L	I	U	S	S	C	A	R	A	M	O	N	G	E	R	T	H
P	T	N	O	N	E	V	H	E	D	O	L	H	G	G	F	F	D	S	A
Y	D	O	B	E	S	E	R	A	R	F	Q	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P
R	T	I	Y	U	I	O	D	P	A	S	D	D	F	G	E	H	J	K	L

AESANDRE

ELITA

GATEMASTER

GWENDOLINE

JULIUS SCARAMONGER

LORD FEAR

PIXEL

SHIELD

SIR HUGH

SKARKILL

SMIRKENORFF

SYLVESTER HANDS

REMEMBER HIM?

Series 5/6. Level 1/2/3.

SKARKILL

Skarkill was introduced as one of the new Opposition in series 5, more specifically as Lord Fear's Goblin Master. This effectively meant that he was in charge of co-ordinating the efforts of Fear's goblin horde to capture dungeoneers. Rayner Bourton was the actor responsible for Skarkill, and wore an eye patch, ragged chainmail and numerous scars for the role. His manner was gruff and threatening, and his menacing leer and continual bloodthirsty use of the expression "*Lovely!*" clearly showed that he could be very dangerous.

We can only guess the details of how Skarkill acquired all his injuries and his hostile nature. All we do know is that he patrolled the Dungeon with his two goblins, Grippa and Rhark, and was under orders from Fear to put an end to the quest, which would involve locking the dungeoneer in manacles and taking them to Mount Fear. However, Skarkill's mercenary roots betrayed him as he was sometimes prepared to let the dungeoneer go if they were able to bribe him, opting for more instant rewards than his master had perhaps promised.

It was the lack of a gold bar that led to Richard II's death in series 5. The team had failed to take the gold they needed from Ariadne's lair, and Skarkill laughed cruelly at their attempt to fob him off with a goblin horn before making Richard a victim for him. Often, however, Skarkill's loyalty to Fear overrode his desire for gold. In series 5, Catherine and Sarah were both forced to use Pixel to get rid of Skarkill, Ben I had to call on Gwendoline for help, Alex I called on Sir Hugh, Chris III used a honey jar full of bees to scare him off, then Ben II in series 6 used a pooka against him. In short, Skarkill was not that easily beaten, and failure meant an end to the quest.

All that, of course, is just one side to Skarkill. The side we saw when he was around Lord Fear was somewhat different: more fawning, more respectful, and certainly more frightened. In series 5, we saw the two speaking through Fear's crystal ball, when Skarkill would often blame his goblins for his failure to catch dungeoneers, or ask for a pay rise. Fear treated him with contempt most of the time. In series 6, we really saw this relationship developed, not least because one of Skarkill's legs had

been injured during a scuffle with Tiny the hobgoblin, so Skarkill spent most of his time hanging around Mount Fear with his master; in fact, he made only two appearances in the Dungeon in series 6. This new role for the character allowed him to become more of a right-hand man and confidant to Lord Fear, a role filled by Lissard in the subsequent two series.

Although it was clear that Fear was still very much in charge, he and Skarkill discussed the implementation of some very evil plans, the main one being the acquisition and taming of a red dragon. Coupled with Skarkill's tendency to hang around Mount Fear, this plan was the Goblin Master's undoing. When Red Death crashed on Mount Fear, Skarkill's other leg was also crippled, rendering his services useless to Lord Fear. Personally, I liked Skarkill and found his threats very real. When his role changed in series 6, I found that it added an extra dimension to both Fear and Skarkill's characters, and I enjoyed the exchanges between them. It is a shame that Skarkill did not return for series 7, but Lissard filled his role as Lord Fear's confidant admirably. The trouble was that that was all he really did do, but that's another story...

Fear Factor: 7 He was a real threat and no pushover.

Humour Rating: 3 He liked to join Lord Fear in his malign merriment.

Killer Instinct: 7 Ready and willing, and proved himself able.

Oscar Standard: 8 A really believable baddie.

CLASSIC QUEST

Series 7

Quest: The Sword of Freedom.

Dungeoneer: Julie Connell. (Julie II.)

Advisors: Helen, Sam and Helen.

Home town: Leek, Staffordshire.

Team score: 10 out of 10.

This is the first winning quest featured in this section, and I've chosen it over the others for two reasons. One is that this was the only all-girl team to win Knightmare, the other is that, in my opinion, they were by far the most pleased and excited to win.

Level One: Julie meets Brother Strange in the dwarf tunnels, who tells her that she is heading for a town called Warlock, in the area of level one known as Grimdale. He gives her a piece of advice; seek the apothecary. Once in Warlock, Julie uses a spyglass to see Lissard presenting his latest devious plan to Lord Fear. He proposes to capture Romahna, and use her to get to Smirkenorff, whom Lord Fear is intent on destroying. Fear likes this plan, and decides that Raptor should be the one to carry out the kidnap. Julie is then accosted by Romahna, who thinks she is Sylvester Hands. Once Julie has persuaded Romahna that she is a dungeoneer, she warns her that Raptor is being sent to kidnap her. Romahna is grateful for the warning, and directs Julie towards the apothecary's stall in the woods.

On the way, the team pick up a bar of gold and a bottle of catnip from a barrel in the forest, before being chased off by a pooka. At Rothberry's stall, Julie buys some *insight* powder. This is used in the next challenge, as Julie has to avoid a marauding troll that is blocking her path to the exit. In the final chamber of the level, Raptor has captured Romahna and is demanding that she opens the Great Door to Smirkenorff so that the Brollachan can kill him. He warns Julie to keep out of the situation. By drinking the contents of the bottle, Julie turns into a huge black cat and scares Raptor away. Romahna is very grateful and opens the door for Julie. She instructs the waiting Smirkenorff to fly the dungeoneer to level two. This he does, and lands in the Rift of Angar.

Level Two: Julie finds a spyglass in the valley, through which the team see Lord Fear instructing the Brollachan to find and destroy the

dungeoneer. Sylvester Hands is also there. Fear tells him to stop drinking on duty and instructs him to leave a phoney magic wand where Hordriss will stumble over it. It looks like a Wand of Majesty, but it is really designed to freeze the user. Next, in the dwarf tunnels, Julie picks up a bottle of ale and an arken stone. Brollachan is the next challenge. He is quite happy to let Julie go after she has fed him with knowledge.

She meets Sylvester Hands in the next room, who prepares to capture her. Julie is able to stop him by getting him drunk on the ale. After some singing, Hands passes out. Julie meets Grimaldine in his study. In return for the arken stone, he tells her the combination to the Trial by Spikes. Using this information, the advisors direct Julie well in the tricky challenge, and she gets through to the final chamber of the level.

Hordriss is teaching a class of would-be sorcerers, and invites Julie to join them. As he is writing on his blackboard, Sidriss runs in carrying a present wrapped in golden wrapping paper, and wishes Hordriss a happy birthday! He opens the present to reveal the fake Wand of Majesty. Once Julie has told him about Lord Fear's plan, Hordriss casts a spell that reveals the wand's true nature. To return the favour, he creates a portal to the Descender, before having to console the distraught Sidriss. Julie is directed into the lift, where a short ride takes her to level three.

Level Three: The level begins in the Sewers of Goth, where Grimaldine tells the team that he has secreted three fragments of a magic arken shield on the level, which Julie can use to form a spell to trap Lord Fear if she finds all the pieces. He rows her through the foul sewers. In the clue room, they pick up a *true sight* potion and a wand called *reveal*, as well as the spell GROW-ME from a scroll. Through the spyglass, Fear is again instructing Brollachan to find and eat Julie. After the monster has gone, he receives a call from an irate Greystagg, who promises revenge against him for destroying Witch Haven. Lord Fear is unimpressed, and tells the witch queen that he will summon her to him if she tries anything, assuring her that he knows that her calling name is Gwen.

In the next chamber, Julie has to use the wand to reveal a third of Grimaldine's arken shield placed high up on the wall. The team cast GROW-ME so that she can reach it, and then dispell so that she can leave the room. Next comes Play Your Cards Right. The girls become the first team ever to complete it successfully. Julie takes the potion so that she can see the puzzle. At the end is the second part of the arken shield. The

final third is picked up immediately in the next chamber, before the Brollachan arrives and demands more knowledge. Once he is satisfied, Julie can progress to the final chamber, where the Sword waits in a large stone. When Julie pulls it out, Lord Fear appears in the room. The team have to spellcast ARKEN to release the shield and trap their enemy, before hurriedly guiding Julie out.

Treguard explains that they will need a RETURN spell in order to get the Sword back to Knightmare Castle, so they'll have to find a friendly sorcerer to award them one. Julie calls Greystagg, who is pleased to give her the spell in return for the knowledge that Lord Fear is trapped in the next chamber. Greystagg flounces off to take her revenge on him; we can only imagine how she does this. Once the RETURN spell is cast, Julie and the Sword are transported back to Knightmare Castle, leading to boisterous celebration from Majida and the delighted team. Once they have calmed down, Treguard summons Hordriss to award the trophies. He congratulates them on their victory, before Treguard sends them back to Leek.

Summary: Practically perfect in every way; a really well-deserved victory.

CREATURE FEATURE

Series 3/4/5. Level 1/2/3.

SKULL GHOSTS

Although they spent only a relatively short period of time in the Dungeon, the floating skulls represent to me a lot of what made Nightmare such an excellent programme: their lingering sense of threat - despite being unqualified by details of exactly what danger they presented - was very disconcerting, and seemed to personify the obscure and clearly supernatural challenge that the Dungeon offered. The grinning translucent skulls would slip in and out of chambers all through the three levels, chattering their teeth menacingly and emitting ghostly wailing noises. The only clue we were given as to their origin came from Hordriss in series 4:

"One does so despise those lingering traces of violent death" - Hordriss.

I suppose that is partly why these particular creatures were so unnerving: with such scant information about them, it was up to us to speculate what kind of violent deaths might leave such a lingering trace, and just what these shades wanted from dungeoneers. As far as I can tell, their mission was to feed on life force, presumably as they had none of their own, being dead. These creatures were therefore not intended to be fatal to dungeoneers, but as a hint to the advisors that the time was right to leave the chamber, in order to avoid the threatening presence looming overhead. This does not mean that skull ghosts were not lethal, however, as prolonged contact caused extreme damage to life force.

Remember poor Scott from series 3, blundering about level two on the wrong path and having missed the first step? The general confusion and tension of the situation were exacerbated by Scott's dangerously low life force as he entered Merlin's room, having been touched by a large green skull ghost on the bridge. While we are on the subject of colours, the vast majority of skull ghosts were white, but some in series 3 were green or even blue! Anyway, moving on to series 5, Sarah had a brush with a shade while trying to open Merlin's Magic Box, wherein lay a vital spell. Having just restored her energy in the inn with Sylvester Hands, her life force was healthy, but had practically run out in the next room thanks to the ghost. Thank goodness there was a pineapple there to put things

right. So, I guess the skull ghosts were mainly a scare device, but woe betide the foolish dungeoneer who stuck around with one for too long.

Fear Factor: 8 I found them very unnerving, yet excitingly so.

Killer Instinct: 2 I blame one partly for the confused rush leading up to Scott's tragic leap into oblivion.

Humanity: 7 Certainly a human skull; maybe even a previous dungeoneer.

Gore Factor: 4 Just how violent were those deaths? We'll never know.

I THINK I READ SOMEWHERE

KNIGHTMARE: Lord Fear's Domain

Published by Yearling in 1994.

Written by Dave Morris.

Plot: Paul and Lucy have just moved to an old converted coaching inn in Sussex called *The Other Half*. They are in quarantine after a bout of measles, and are left alone on Halloween night when their parents go to a party. Their evening takes an unexpected turn when Sylvester Hands arrives at the house and starts looking up the chimney for a way into the realm of Nightmare. He tells Paul and Lucy that three angry witches - the Weird Sisters of Birnan Wood - are chasing him. What is more, they are after his blood because he has stolen something from them. When the witches arrive, Sly, Paul and Lucy are all forced to scramble up the chimney and into Nightmare. At least they are safe from the witches, but Paul and Lucy are now stuck in a strange world. Hands agrees to help them find their way home, but Lord Fear complicates matters by setting them a challenge:

Unravel my riddles by sunrise, or remain in my world for all eternity.

And so Paul and Lucy must travel through Nightmare trying to find their way home, solving various riddles on the way. And this is the clever bit: you have to help them by solving the puzzles. Paul and Lucy meet lots of characters on their journey, who set them riddles. If and when they and you get them right, the characters give them clues about the path homeward. One of the characters they meet is Greystagg, who tells them that they must find the Well of Dawn to get home. She also gives Lucy a magic bell that will bring dawn instantly if it is rung once, twice and then thrice.

Waiting at the Well of Dawn is Lord Fear, but Paul and Lucy get past him by bamboozling him with some riddles. When they get home, however, the three witches are waiting for them. After tricking them into using Greystagg's bell to bring dawn, Paul and Lucy's adventure is over. And do their parents wonder where they've been all night? No, because they assumed that they had gone to bed when they got back from the party but did not check to see!

Characters from the main story.

Paul: He seems to be a mischievous chap, threatening to paint measles on his face when he goes back to school so that he can tell the other kids he's still infectious, but he is also concerned that Lucy doesn't get scared while they're on their journey. I guess he must be good at solving riddles, too.

Lucy: She is certainly the more intelligent of the two, and seems to solve most of the riddles that they are set. She is the group's main mouthpiece, talking to the characters more than Paul and Hands do, and one senses that she is the brains of the operation.

Paul and Lucy's parents: This negligent couple go to a Halloween party dressed up as The Devil and a witch.

Sylvester Hands: The thief's strange behaviour confuses Paul and Lucy at first, but they rely on him as their guide and source of information about the characters they meet once they get into Knightmare.

The Sisters of Birnan Wood: They wait in eagerness for Sly to return so that they may punish him for stealing from them. When Paul and Lucy arrive back, they decide to settle for eating fricasseed children instead.

Lord Fear: He challenges Paul and Lucy to solve the riddles they will be set by daybreak, or else remain in Knightmare forever. He tries to break the rules by appearing in person and stopping them from escaping once they have completed the challenge, but is completely bamboozled by Paul and Lucy's puzzles. They escape while he's trying to work them out.

Brother Strange: The proverbial monk sets a riddle about what direction the group should take.

Marta: The serving wench asks Paul and Lucy to help her work out how to seat some awkward customers in the Crazy Heifer. In return, she tells them that Greystagg is their most likely source of help and that they should travel with Ah Wok's cart to find her.

Ah Wok: The oriental tradesman gives the group a ride, then writes a coded message telling them that Greystagg is in the Crystal Cavern.

Fidjit: The thief and locksmith gives the group a riddle that helps them

to find the way to the Crystal Cavern.

Majida: The annoying genie pops up from time to time with a crossword or other puzzle for you to try.

Sir Hugh: He's left his shield with a load of other knights' shields, but has forgotten which one is his! Once Paul and Lucy have helped him to work it out, he points them in the right direction.

Grippa and Rhark: Paul and Lucy have to ask the pair of goblins one question about whether to turn left or right to reach the Crystal Cavern. The catch is that one always tells the truth and the other one always lies.

Hordriss: The proud sorcerer sets the group an unnecessarily long riddle that tells them to turn left from their current position.

Sidriss and Motley: Once Lucy and Paul have helped Sidriss solve a riddle that Hordriss had set for her, Motley tells them that they need a special key to get into the Crystal Cavern. One of Greystagg's five familiars has it, and Motley sets a puzzle that tells Paul and Lucy which one has the key.

Padock the hedgehog: The familiar with the key. She sets a riddle before she gives it to Paul and Lucy.

Touchstone the toad, Pippy the bat, Malkin the cat and Harpier the crow: Greystagg's other familiars, just in case you were curious.

Greystagg: The witch queen sets a puzzle about two burning candles, then gives the children advice about the Well of Dawn. She also gives Lucy a magic bell that brings dawn instantly.

Brother Mace: The large and friendly monk sets a series of clues on a scroll that reveal the password for the toll bridge.

The Elfin Knight: After setting a couple of puzzles, this mysterious knight shows Paul and Lucy an elf-path that will take them to the Well of Dawn.

Brollachan: The Celtic monster emerges from a swamp near the Well and agrees to let Paul and Lucy past if they answer three of his riddles.

PUZZLE PAGE TWO

Here I have provided you with one series and twelve associated words.
The rest is up to you.

S	D	D	F	G	E	H	J	K	L	D	D	F	G	E	H	J	K	L	P
I	A	Q	E	R	T	Y	A	H	W	O	K	U	I	O	P	A	S	D	A
D	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	O	B	C	X	Z	Z	X	A	C	S	S
R	S	D	F	G	H	T	R	E	L	W	C	E	O	H	M	E	L	R	S
I	E	R	A	O	C	W	E	E	F	N	K	A	A	S	J	O	O	I	W
S	U	F	N	C	O	U	N	S	E	I	D	G	R	E	H	I	U	A	O
S	S	A	W	K	Y	S	E	E	N	N	R	H	A	W	S	T	D	R	R
N	E	V	S	T	S	S	E	L	D	K	E	T	M	A	S	I	W	E	D
T	C	A	P	T	A	I	N	N	E	M	A	N	O	R	T	T	A	I	H
H	H	E	Y	Y	T	O	O	I	N	K	D	T	O	I	N	N	L	F	F
R	T	H	G	E	T	L	E	Y	L	S	N	T	I	D	C	I	K	T	U
E	P	Y	L	O	U	R	B	E	L	L	O	Y	N	O	I	Y	E	I	T
D	H	R	A	O	W	S	T	H	H	E	R	B	A	L	L	L	R	I	N
D	T	O	S	T	E	H	N	E	E	I	T	G	H	F	B	O	U	R	S
E	G	A	S	R	D	E	N	G	H	E	G	O	E	O	S	R	O	U	N
A	D	T	H	E	A	R	E	G	N	D	S	Y	P	A	E	R	A	S	J
T	U	R	D	A	T	H	G	A	B	I	S	A	R	R	D	O	C	O	H
H	T	A	S	R	Y	N	I	T	E	G	Y	O	U	I	V	N	E	S	W
N	O	T	H	E	G	R	E	Y	S	T	A	G	G	O	M	E	H	T	T
A	D	D	F	G	E	H	J	K	L	D	D	F	G	E	H	J	K	L	A

AH WOK

CAPTAIN NEMANOR

CLOUDWALKER

DREADNORT

GREYSTAGG

HEGGATY

PASSWORD

RED DEATH

RIDOLFO

SIDRISS

SPYGLASS

WOLFENDEN

A LAST RESORT

Welcome to the sixth chapter of the mammoth story penned by Newark's Carl Bateson. Matt, James and John are trying to get the better of Sylvester Hands. It can't be that difficult, surely!

James followed Hands to the chest. He peered at what was inside, before shaking his head to the others. Matt approached him, looking for the exit, when suddenly, amongst all the other rubbish being thrown out, a small strong bottle landed on a thick cloth, and rolled in front of John.

"Hey you guys - look at this" John said, picking up the bottle.

James was the second to arrive on the scene. He looked carefully at what seemed to be a stormgeist in a bottle. John turned it over to reveal a label reading *Fang*.

"Fang" Matt read. "Could that be his name?"

"I suppose so" John shrugged. "But why would his name be of any significance?"

"It would mean a lot" James explained. "I heard of a case where a pooka was controlled by using simple commands and his name."

"Doesn't mean it'll work with a stormgeist" John retorted, obviously under a lot of stress. "I mean, what if we can't control him when we open the bottle?"

"How do you expect us to get the Idol of Gysmutu if we're not prepared to take risks?" James pointed out, taking the bottle and shoving it into his pocket.

"Fine" John replied. "But it's *your* responsibility!"

He brushed past James and walked by Hands, through an old archway ahead. The others soon followed when they noticed that Hands had nearly finished hunting through the chest. If they were around when this happened, they might have to engage in another boring conversation. They weren't prepared for that!

John had arrived at a huge metal gate. The room was quiet, owning only an exit to the rear and a portal, which James and Matt soon emerged from. Soon John became impatient and began to closely examine the huge gate. A bitter draft came from the gaps in the door. The air inside the room smelt musty, and heavily of oil. Suddenly a loud horn sounded. The whole team turned to the rear exit as Skarkill and two goblins marched in.

"Right, what do we have here?" he demanded.

The two goblins danced around behind Skarkill, waving two heavy clubs.

"Three children snooping around, eh?" the warlord continued. "Lord Fear

doesn't like children snooping around. Well, he doesn't like children at all! Grippa! Rhark! Take these children to the goblin pens."

No sooner than he said this the hungry pair of goblins advanced on Matt and John. James, meanwhile, was trying to work loose the cork of the bottle containing the stormgeist. His hands kept slipping around the slimy cork. His retreat ended by backing into the wall. He slid along, finally finding the window. He panicked as he quietly slid the bottle between two badly shaped rocks. He slid his hands around the bottle, as one of the goblins was approaching to see what James was up to. Suddenly, the cork came loose. A large stormgeist materialised above Skarkill. It flew around, as if given freedom after a squashed century. With little effort, James uttered the important words:

"Fang, attack!"

The stormgeist immediately swooped down and chased the frightened Grippa away. Its teeth began to bite violently as if desperate to bite into some goblin flesh. It swooped down again, ripping the club out of Rhark's shaking hand. Skarkill was still puzzled as Fang slowly approached his shaking body.

"You haven't seen the last of me!" Skarkill bellowed, backing away until he felt the wall directly behind him.

Skarkill darted out of the chamber, with Fang hot on his tail. James stood facing the other two, wearing a huge smile.

The door began to creak open, to reveal the Descender. The three entered the lift, which took them down to level three. As soon as they stepped out, they all experienced a hot and musty atmosphere. The heat appeared to emerge beneath them. James lowered himself onto the stone floor. Expecting a cold surface, he was surprised to find it warm. He softly pressed his ear against it as Matt walked across the chamber to a wall with slime stretching down onto the floor. It was as if it was melting. Beetles lay on their backs, dying under the extreme heat.

"Rumbling" James told the others, rising from the ground. "Strange; I would have expected it to be cold. It almost appears as if we're situated inside a volcano."

"Somehow I doubt it's natural - or at least supposed to be here," Matt said, lifting a rock to reveal more dying invertebrates.

"Why do you say that?" James asked.

"Well, these creatures are dying. The slime - which most probably has been here for many years - is suddenly breaking up."

Matt's eyes followed the slime oozing down the rock face, onto the cavern ground as it continued its journey through a crack in the ground.

He heard a faint hiss.

"This rumbling is getting worse" John told them, fearing the worst, although quite contentedly warm.

"Look at that crack!" James exclaimed, walking over to it.

"What about it?" mumbled John as he cleared the dust off a rock to sit on.

It was then that he saw his answer. Steam was rising from the crack as James peered down. The increasing rumbling was no longer the centre of attention.

"Come on? What's down there?" John eagerly awaited their response as he gazed around the shaking cavern. "What did you see?"

He could not understand how they could ignore the shaking of the cavern that was now bringing down dust from above.

"We have to go!" he insisted, as they held their expression of terror. "What's more important than being crushed by a cave-in? What did you see?"

James's dry mouth opened slowly as he uttered one word:

"Trouble."

He immediately rose as the shaking began to bring down larger objects. John pulled James away as he noticed a huge crack appearing across the exit and the way they came. The crack widened as John stumbled onto whatever he could grab. The heat was becoming unbearable as John fell across the crack. He desperately looked down the ever-widening gap, now more of a chasm. He held onto some rocks, firmly attached to the floor. He now saw what was causing the heat: larva. Like a thick syrup of pure rage it rapidly rose in the chasm, exerting more heat onto John.

Both James and Matt had leaped across and were crawling for the exit. John turned to find the floor ahead of him crumbling away, like a biscuit with all its moisture sucked out. He desperately sought a better grip on the rocks as slime coated his fingers and lost him his grip. He flung his arms around an adjacent rock. It was brittle and broke up into a smooth powder. He looked below as the heat stung his eyes. He felt the blood draining away from his eyes as he looked behind him.

The Celtic magic that Hordriss had spoken of was removing the cavern from existence. Beyond was a void. John turned back to the heat of the portal ahead. He was only hanging on by a rapidly crumbling floor. The heat burned his feet as fire burned all around him. The ground began to rise, blocking the exit. Matt came sliding down next to John as he felt his

grip loosening. He turned to the void, and as he saw Matt trying to signal to him, he remembered. His mouth was barely operational as he used his last piece of energy shouting:

"Spellcasting: P-R-O-T-E-C..."

He lost his grip. He began to burn all over. With extreme agony, he managed to utter:

"T!"

It was over. They had survived.

Well, things certainly are hotting up for our three heroes (ho-ho!) Will they be able to survive in the fragile realm of level three? Read *A Last Resort* next issue to find out.

POETRY CORNER

This one was written as a disappointed initial reaction to the final episode of series 8, so forgive me if it seems a bit bitter. The subject is the quest of Dunstan, Alan, Oliver and Alex.

The final challenge to win through,
But the number of levels completed was two!
Lissard trapped Hordriss in a cage,
It sent the mage into a rage.
In level one a blade they took,
And Motley then his coxcomb shook.
Smirkenorff told where to find Stiletta,
She'll take her blade back, if they let 'er!
A short cut challenge that was easy to do
Was used in place of level two.
Level three was not too hard;
A ship, a queen, a foolish guard.
The final challenge was not *so* easy,
But Motley had already given them the key!
Hordriss was rescued, the Crown retrieved,
The Quest was won, but the watchers grieved.
For the final time it was time to go,
What a tragic way to end the show.

NEXT ISSUE DETAILS

That's it for now, but please come back and join me for The Eye Shield issue seventeen in September 2002. *A Last Resort* delves deeper into the doomed depths of level three. Another group of young heroes brave the Dungeon in *Adventure Time*. Our *Classic Quest* is a classic flop. Get ready for something new and challenging in *I Think I Read Somewhere*. It's back to series 4 yet again for *Poetry Corner*. Dodge those fireballs if you want to survive *Remember This?* A fast-talking tradesman-come-poacher: can you *Remember Him?* *Creature Feature* examines Knightmare's reptilian rascallions. And Robin Barlow at last presents his ode to laughter. It's all coming in September, so keep your eyes peeled for it then, but be sure to bring your friends for this is no place to visit alone.